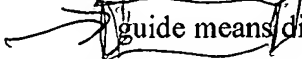


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Claim 1 (Proposed amendment): An apparatus for delivering food product to a means for cutting in a substantially horizontal plane through the product, the apparatus comprising:

a passage extending downwardly toward the cutting means and defining an opening in proximity to the cutting means, the passage comprising oppositely-disposed first and second portions;

 guide means disposed along the first portion of the passage and oriented substantially parallel to the passage; and

means for applying a force on a product traveling downward through the passage so that ~~the force being sufficient to push~~ the product is pushed away from the second portion of the passage, toward the first portion of the passage, and into contact with the guide means during engagement with the cutting means.

Claim 12 (proposed amendment): An apparatus for delivering elongate food product to a cutting means having a substantially horizontal cutting plane, the apparatus comprising:

means for defining a substantially vertical passage, the defining means comprising a wall portion, a second portion diametrically opposite the wall portion so as to be spaced apart from the wall portion by the passage, and an opening in proximity to the cutting means;

splines disposed on the wall portion and oriented substantially parallel to the passage;

at least a first set of at least two fluid jets flowing in a downward direction across the passage from the second portion of the passage toward the wall portion, the fluid jets converging toward the wall portion to apply a force on a product traveling downward through the passage, the at least two fluid jets pushing force being sufficient ~~to push~~ the product away from the second portion of the defining means and toward the wall portion of the defining means so as to maintain the product in contact with the

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splines during engagement with the cutting means; and

means for delivering the product to the passage, the delivering means being operable to separate and longitudinally align the product with the passage so that the product enters and travels through the passage with a longitudinal axis of the product substantially parallel to the passage.

21 (proposed amendment): A method of delivering food product to a means for cutting in a substantially horizontal plane through the product, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a passage extending downwardly toward the cutting means and defining an opening in proximity to the cutting means, the passage comprising guide means disposed along a first portion of the passage that is opposite a second portion of the passage, the guide means being and oriented substantially parallel to the passage; and

applying a force on a product traveling downward through the passage so that ~~that , the force being sufficient to push~~ the product is pushed away from the second portion of the passage, toward the first portion of the passage, and into contact with the guide means during engagement with the cutting means.

Claim 32 (proposed amendment): A method of delivering elongate food product to a cutting means having a substantially horizontal cutting plane, the method comprising the steps of:

providing a substantially vertical passage defined by a wall portion, a second portion diametrically opposite the wall portion so as to be spaced apart from the wall portion by the passage, and an opening in proximity to the cutting means, the wall portion having splines extending therefrom and oriented substantially parallel to the passage;

delivering elongate product to the passage so that the elongate product are

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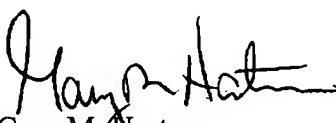
separated and longitudinally aligned with the passage so that the elongate product enters and travels through the passage with a longitudinal axis of the elongate product substantially parallel to the passage; and

flowing at least a first set of at least two fluid jets in a downward direction across the passage from the second portion of the passage toward the wall portion, the fluid jets converging toward the wall portion to apply a force on a product traveling downward through the passage, ~~the force being sufficient to push~~ the product within the passage being pushed away from the second portion of the vertical passage and toward the wall portion of the vertical passage so as to maintain the product in contact with the splines during engagement with the cutting means.

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Applicants ask that the Examiner contact their undersigned representative at  
(219) 462-4999 after he has had a chance to review the proposed claim amendments.

Respectfully submitted,

By   
Gary M. Hartman  
Reg. No. 33,898

December 10, 2003  
Hartman & Hartman, P.C.  
Valparaiso, Indiana 46383  
TEL.: (219) 462-4999  
FAX: (219) 464-1166